

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: FEDERAL NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) GOING NOWHERE

1. SUMMARY: NDP FAILURE TO ATTRACT SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC ATTENTION TO EXCITE LARGE PORTION OF CANADIAN ELECTORATE TRACEABLE TO SEVERAL CURRENT PROBLEMS FACING THE PARTY. NDP LEADER ED BROADBENT IS BOTH AN ACADEMIC AND AN ACCOMPLISHED PARLIAMENTARIAN, BUT HIS PUBLIC IMAGE IS LACK-LUSTER, ALL THE MORE SO WHEN COMPARED TO HIS PREDECESSORS, DAVID LEWIS AND TOMMY DOUGLAS. THE PARTY HAS LOST IDEOLOGICAL ZEAL AS ITS DIRECTION HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY MIDDLE-CLASS AND INTELLECTURAL ELEMENTS AND ITS PROGRAM PRE-EMPTED OVER THE YEARS BY THE LIBERAL PARTY. EVEN ITS CURRENT RALLYING CRY AGAINST THE ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM IS FLAWED SINCE THE TWO NDP CONTROLLED PROVINCES HAVE ACCEPTED THE WAGE PRICE CONTROLS. THE NDP IS, IN SUM, GOING NOWHERE FEDERALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) LEADER ED BROADBENT'S REACTION TO SEPT 14 CABINET SHUFFLE WAS LIKE PICTURE WORTH 1000 WORDS, CAPTURING MUCH OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE WRONG WITH NDP THESE DAYS.

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3. AT TIME OF SEPT 14 CABINET CHANGES, BROADBENT WAS ON EXTENDED TOUR OF THE HUSTINGS (RURAL ONTARIO) TRYING TO SELL THIS YEAR'S NEAR JOHNIE-ONE-NOTE THEME OF NDP THAT ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM IS INEQUITABLE SINCE IT LIMITS WAGES BUT NOT PRICES OR CORPORATE PROFITS. A SIDELINE PURPOSE WAS GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING, A TRADITIONAL NDP ACTIVITY AND STRENGTH.

4. ALTHOUGH NOT ENTIRELY IGNORED, BROADBENT ACTIVITIES WERE RECEIVING PAGE 3 OR 4 MEDIA ATTENTION. HIS COMMENTS ON CABINET SHUFFLE (IT SHOWS TRUDEAU KNOWS HE'S IN TROUBLE. SOME NEW FACES WON'T OBSCURE FACT OF 750,000 OUT OF WORK) MADE PAGE 9 OF SEPT 16 GLOBE AND MAIL IN SMALL COLUMN AT BOTTOM OF PAGE.

5. PICTURE CONVEYED BY THIS INCIDENT AND BY CURRENT FEDERAL NDP POSTURE GENERALLY IS ONE OF LISTLESSNESS WITH A LARGELY IGNORED FEDERAL PARTY GOING NOWHERE. AND, AS POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE POINT OUT, THE REASONS ARE NOT HARD TO FIND.

6. ED BROADBENT IS A SOUND ACADEMIC AND EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARIAN. HE PROJECTS A PUBLIC IMAGE, HOWEVER, ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE EXCITING THAN FORMER PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE LEADER ROBERT STANFIELD'S. THIS FAILING IS ACCENTUATED BY COMPARISON WITH HIS SPELLBINDING PREDECESSORS, TOMMY DOUGLAS AND DAVID LEWIS.

7. THE NDP HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS FORMER EVANGELICAL, SOCIALIST FIRE AND, IN THE WORDS OF ONE REPORTER, "HAS GONE MIDDLE CLASS." AT LAST YEAR'S CONVENTION WHICH CHOSE BROADBENT LEADER, FOR EXAMPLE, MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD UNIONISTS AND ACADEMICS HAD RELATIVELY LITTLE TROUBLE IN OUTPOINTING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DOWNTRODDEN. OVER THE YEARS, THE LIBERAL PARTY HAS PRE-EMPTED MANY OF NDP MAJOR POLICIES, E.G., BASIC SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS. NOW, THE NDP IS LEFT WITHOUT A MAJOR, VOTE-GETTING CAUSE. ITS BASIC THEME OF

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GREATER PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL HAS LITTLE APPEAL TO AN ELECTORATE APPARENTLY INTERESTED IN LESS NOT MORE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. EVEN ITS CURRENT PREOCCUPATION, THE ENDING OF THE ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM, SEEMS FLAWED; THE TWO NDP-CONTROLLED PROVINCES (MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN) HAVE ACCEPTED THE PRICE-AND-INCOME CONTROLS. THIS HAS CAUSED THE PARTY DIFFICULTIES WITH THE LABOR MOVEMENT WHICH IS

STEADFASTLY OPPOSED TO THE CONTROLS AND WHICH HAS BEEN A TRADITIONAL FINANCIAL SOURCE FOR THE NDP. LABOR PROVIDES ABOUT \$600,000 PER YEAR TO THE NDP THROUGH UNION CHECK-OFFS. IT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, DELIVER A SOLID BLOC OF VOTES. ESTIMATES ARE THAT ONLY ONE IN FOUR UNION MEMBERS VOTES NDP.

8. AS PERENNIAL THIRD FEDERAL PARTY, THE NDP SUFFERS AS CANADIAN ELECTORATE BEGINS TO FOCUS ON COMING FEDERAL ELECTION. MANY VOTERS WHOSE SYMPATHIES LIE WITH NDP PRESUMABLY SUPPORT EITHER LIBERAL OR PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES LOOKING FOR A WINNER. RECENT POLLING DATA SUPPORTS THIS VIEW WITH CORRELATION OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH LIBERAL GOVERNMENT AND GROWING SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATIVES. NDP STRENGTH HAS REMAINED AT ABOUT 17 PERCENT WHERE IT HAS BEEN FOR YEARS.

9. THE NDP COULD PLAY A SPOILER ROLE IN NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS. ED BROADBENT RECENTLY TOLD POLICEMEN THAT HIS SOUNDINGS IN ONTARIO INDICATE THAT NDP COULD SCORE HEAVILY AND AT EXPENSE OF LIBERALS. HE ESTIMATED THAT NDP COULD GAIN UP TO 40-45 SEATS IN NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

10. BROADBENT'S ESTIMATES ARE SELF-SERVING AND, IN OUR VIEW, INFLATED. NONETHELESS, SOME NDP GAINS IN ONTARIO COULD BE DETERMINATIVE IN 1978 FEDERAL ELECTIONS SINCE ONTARIO IS RECOGNIZED BY BOTH LIBERALS AND PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES (PC) AS THE CRUCIAL PROVINCE. INDEED, THERE IS EVEN POSSIBILITY OF NDP REPRESENTING THE SWING

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FACTOR IN PARLIAMENT WITH A MINORITY PC GOVERNMENT. THE VERY SUGGESTION OF THIS IMPROBABLE ALLIANCE IS, HOWEVER, AN INDICATION OF HOW MIDDLE-CLASS THE NDP HAS BECOME. AND A POSSIBLE SPOILER OR A PIVOTAL ROLE IN MINORITY GOVERNMENT DOES NOT NEGATE THE FACT THAT THE NDP IS GOING NOWHERE, WITH AN AS YET UNINSPIRING LEADER, FADING IDEOLOGICAL MOMENTUM AND A DEARTH OF NEW IDEAS. ENDERS

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